FREE

TAGA SPORTS

JANUARY - MARCH 2017

JUHN TENORIO BEATS THE ODDS

SEE YOU LATER COACH SEKI

7 DETOX SMOOTHIES FOR 2017

4 EXERCISES TO RULE THEM ALL

10 YEARS OF 'HELL' ON SAIPAN

MANACOP STARTS YOUNG

Q&A WITH JUSTIN ANDREW

RICHARD BABAC HOLDS COURT

2017 SPORTS CALENDAR

JANUARY

2nd Annual "Timmy Would Go" Memorial Paddle Classic

The outrigger canoe and stand-up paddle board tournament is held in memory of Timothy Lee Salas Wesley Jr., who was also called "Timmy Boy". He died on Jan. 3, 2015 as he tried to rescue two young girls from drowning in the waters at Forbidden Island.

Saipan Swim Club Distance Double Meet

The intramural club meet is designed to give beginner, intermediate, and advance swimmers the chance to showcase what they have learned in their classes as well as instilling in them a sense of achievement and confidence in the water.

Marianas Sunset Fun Run

The 5K event will culminate the year-long celebration of Marianas Visitors Authority's 40th anniversary. The run will begin at 6pm at Garapan Fishing Base, with the turnaround point at the Japanese tank at Quartermaster Road.

FEBRUARY

Coconut Tennis Classic

Northern Mariana Islands Tennis Association's second tournament for the 2016-2017 season will feature competitions in the junior divisions and the mixed-up doubles.

SSC Meek and Mighty Ocean Swim

Saipan Swim Club will have its first open water swim and the event is also open to non-SSC members and adult swimmers.

NMIFA Youth Spring League

Local youth soccer action resumes with the various clubs battling for the U14, U15, U12, and U17 division championships and players in the lower age groups participating in a grassroots program for the season.

MARCH

Ironman Saipan 70.3

The CNMI will host the triathlon event for the first time and the competition will kick off the new trifecta for March.

13th Annual XTERRA Saipan Championships

The second big event for this month will have pro and amateur triathletes alike trying to conquer Saipan's treacherous off-road bike and run course after swimming in the waters of Micro Beach.

12th Annual Saipan Marathon

The event will cap March's trifecta and is expected to draw the most international and local participants.

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We enter our sixth year with this edition of TAGA *Sports*, excited with the potential coverages that await us in the years ahead. There's Ironman 70.0, XTERRA Saipan Championship, the Saipan Marathon, etc. Despite our initial misgivings, we do not seem to be running out of possible items to write about and, in fact, it sometimes feels like our cup is running over, as we try to make sure that all our bases are covered.

Kaisa starts us off on 2017 with a brief reminder of what detox diets can and cannot do for you. As usual, she mixes her theories

with practical applications that give us a pretty good idea of what our bodies are capable of. ***See Page 4.*** Her article is ably backed by Dre's article on the exercises that give you the most bang for your buck. The article is short but Dre loads it up with some witty observations. Let's just say that following Dre's advice will set you up to survive a zombie apocalypse. ***See Page 6.***

The Hell of the Marianas may be comparatively new compared to other storied racing events in the Commonwealth but it is fast making a name for itself as one of the toughest bike races in the Pacific. Not bad for a race that came after Tagaman and XTERRA Saipan. ***See Page 9.*** Another relative newcomer to the CNMI's sporting scene is paddling but the CNMI Paddling Federation aims to change that by taking an active role in the upcoming Pacific Mini Games. We will see. ***See Page 13.***

The influx of more workers to the islands means a more lively sporting scene. In the case of Filipinos, it is mostly more basketball games. A hard-packed surface and a basket at one end is the average Filipino's idea of Eden. I remember that, soon after the onslaught of Typhoon Haiyan, the first thing survivors rebuilt was a basketball court. In the CNMI, having enough number of referees is reason enough to play ball. So the entry of Richard Babac to the CNMI is heaven-sent. Our associate editor, Mark Rabago, sat down with him for a one-on-one. ***See Page 16.***

Coach Seki of the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association, on loan from the Japan Football Association, will soon be returning to his roots—a great loss for the CNMI. TAGA *Sports* marks his departure with a tribute penned by Roselyn Monroyo. ***See Page 18.***

For inspiration, no one could beat Juhn Tenorio, the swimming prodigy of the Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center. He overcame a deadly disease at 2 years old to become a mainstay of the Kan Pacific swimming pool and a record-holder besides. His own parents are amazed at his improvement and, like the child that he is, remains unimpressed despite being a living embodiment of survival despite the odds. ***See Page 22.***

Another who also got his start as a prodigy is Simon T. Manacop, who has conquered the bowling lanes while growing up. Now with a family of his own, Manacop still visits the lanes in his spare time. ***See Page 26.***

As always, we welcome any feedback, story ideas, criticisms, corrections, etc. Just email them to editor@saipantribune.com and we will be sure to find space for them.

Sinseramente,

JAYVEE VALLEJERA
editor@saipantribune.com
Managing Editor

COVER ART
Tsunami Saipan's Juhn Tenorio reacts after completing a race at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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scoreboard

ROSELYN MONROYO

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Goodbye, see you later Coach Seki.

ROSELYN MONROYO

ROSELYN MONROYO

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WRITER'SBLOC

kaisaanderson

Kaisa Anderson is a registered dietitian nutritionist. She has been contributing nutrition articles to TAGA Sports for two years and counting. She has already crumpled up the year 2016 and looks forward to a new outlook for 2017. The only thing that hasn't changed is her love for chocolate milk.

erwinencinares

Erwin Encinares, the youngest reporter in the brood of TAGA Sports, sometimes plays basketball and loves French fries. He is still learning the ropes of journalism so cut him some slack. He is also a certified food lover and it shows in his waistline and love handles.

ferdiede la torre

Ferdie de la Torre, a journalism graduate of the University of Santo Tomas in the Philippines, has covered all news beats in the CNMI. Ferdie, who loves to play basketball, had his first taste of rolling a "strike" on Saipan, and finds the sports of bowling very challenging.

dredelos santos

Dre Delos Santos, a Mount Carmel School alumnus, earned his Bachelor's of Science in Kinesiology at the University of Hawaii and now runs his own fitness business as a certified strength coach in Honolulu.

roselynmonroyo

Roselyn Monroyo stayed in the wee hours of morning just to watch the TV coverage of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. As expected, she was glued to basketball matches, but was lured to rugby 5 matches after Fiji started winning before eventually claiming the gold medal against Great Britain.

jonperez

Jon Perez used to ride solo back in the Philippines, careful not to get hit by reckless drivers. He once rode his bike to a friend's house in the town of Baliuag in Bulacan province, some 40 kilometers away from where he lives in Meycauyan City.

markrabago

Mark Rabago tried officiating a basketball game in college with mixed results and has only agreed to don the referee's zebra stripes one more time—during an inter-company sports fest. Swimming is also not his cup of tea as he is not particularly buoyant. He, however, did jump from the top of a 20-foot waterfall once.

Email letters to the editor to editor@saipantribune.com or mail to PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan MP 96950. Submissions to TAGA Sports must include the writer's name, village address (no P.O. boxes), and daytime phone or mobile number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity and may be published or used in any medium. All submissions become the property of the publication and will not be returned.

7 DETOX SMOOTHIES TO RESET 2017

MONDAY

AWESOME ACAI

1 frozen banana
1 cup frozen mixed berries
½ cup Acai berry juice
½ cup unsweetened, almond milk

DIRECTIONS:
Blend.
Recipe from eatthis.com

TUESDAY

GREEN LEMONADE

1 to 2 large sweet apples
1 cup kale or spinach
½ cup chopped celery
1/3 cup lemon juice
¾ cup water
Optional: Fresh Ginger

DIRECTIONS:
Blend.
Recipe from
chocolatecoveredkatie.com

WEDNESDAY

TROPICAL TWIST

1 cup Papaya
½ cup coconut milk
½ cup coconut water
1 Tbsp. Honey
Juice From ½ Lime

DIRECTIONS:
Blend.
Recipe from Prevention.com

KAISAANDERSONRD
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

Detox diets have been a popular choice when it comes to diets for New Year's resolutions. The attraction to the diet could be the promise of cleaning your body of all these mysterious "toxins" that sound so scary. Or it may be the testimonies and promises of feeling more energy, clear skin, and weight loss. Regardless, why not take a look into what detoxifying really means and how there is potential for this diet to benefit your health for the coming year of 2017.

The first thing to know is detoxifying occurs naturally in your body as an everyday process, with or without the help from food, medicine, or natural products. Your kidneys, liver, intestines, and spleen are the major organs that do the heavy lifting of filtering and removing toxins from your body. Each plays a role in filtering contaminants from ingested food or water, inhaled toxins from environmental sources, physiological waste, or foreign microbes in the body. So detoxifying does happen, whether or not you eat certain foods. However, detox diets are promoted as doing the job of removing toxins from the body and the digestive tract, when in reality the diet is only helping your organs do their everyday duty.

Now there are many variations on how and why to do a detox diet. They vary from the duration, the food consumed,

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healthy families america
H.O.M.E. Visiting Program

This projected is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number X02MC28239, Affordable Care Act (ACA) Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program grant.

THURSDAY

PINK VITAMIN C

1 cup strawberries
¼ cup tomato
1/2 cup cantaloupe
Juice from 1 orange
Ice as desired

DIRECTIONS:
Blend.
Recipe from droz.com

FRIDAY

BERRY MADNESS

1 ½ cup mixed berries
1 banana
1 tsp. chia seeds
1 cup almond milk
Optional: juice from ½ orange

DIRECTIONS:
Blend.
Recipe adapted from aduna.com

SATURDAY

GINGERY MANGO

1 cup frozen mango
1 frozen banana
2/3 cup shredded carrots
1 Tbsp. fresh ginger
½ cup coconut water

DIRECTIONS:
Blend.
Recipe from initforthelongrun.com

SUNDAY

ULTIMATE GREEN

1 orange, peeled
1 medium banana
½ lime, peeled
2 cups of kale or spinach
8 oz. of water or almond milk

DIRECTIONS:
Blend.
Recipe from incrediblesmoothies.com

use of supplements, and lifestyle practices. The one chosen is purely up to the person and what they feel they need. Some variations can include a focus on the duration of the diet; this is to allow the body time to fully rid itself of pollutants. Alternatively, the diet may focus on use of supplements to aid in removal of unwanted toxins. A common method is juicing, and having a liquid-only diet for a short period of time to help with the removal of excess water and impurities in the body. Lastly, some focus on fasting from foods or products with unnatural components. They can be as complicated or as simple as you choose, but the focus should always be on natural whole foods that are rich in nutrients. When choosing a diet, always take into account your medical condition, as some detox diets are not fit or safe for those with certain or multiple health problems. If you choose to do a fasting, supplemental, or low calorie detox make sure to consult with a medical or nutrition professional.

Detox diets tend to focus on ridding the body of excess water, impurities, and fat. The truth is, if you lose weight during a detox, it was probably water weight, and it's going to come back! However, I am not dismissing detox diets, as they have benefits. A scientific review found that commercial detox diets did positively impact the liver's efficiency in elimination of toxins; however, more evidence and larger studies were suggested. When your body has been fed a diet high in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and water, it can function to its best capacity. Therefore, detox diets that are focused on concentrated amounts of antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals tend to make you feel better. So to get started in your next year of health, try adding a nice splash to your diet every day this week with seven delicious detox smoothies that are a cocktail of nutrients! Happy blending!

ZIKA VIRUS AND PREGNANCY

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H.O.M.E. Visiting Program

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A sled push is a staple in many strength training programs. Here, writer Dre Delos Santos monitors a client as she performs a sled push.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

FOUR EXERCISES TO RULE THEM ALL

While I've always had an open mind, there were instances in the past where I just wanted to bang my head into the wall over the uncertain things I saw other fitness professionals do. Nowadays, I try to understand the reasoning behind their approach.

How you train or what you advocate is your move. Every exercise has its place due to the concept of specificity.

That being said, if we're talking about exercises that are the most bang for your buck, it's no question that you've got to hammer down movements that are going to make you strong—and exercises that exhibit high levels of muscular recruitment are going to be your best bet.

Here are four exercises to rule them all.

DREDELOSSANTOS
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

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TOP: Writer Dre Delos Santos demonstrates a front load Bulgarian split. **PHOTO ABOVE:** The deadlift is highly regarded as the king of all exercises. Here, writer Dre Delos Santos monitors a client as she performs a deadlift.

1 PROWLER/SLED PUSH

These are a staple in so many strength training programs, and for good reason. They're the best way to lean out without losing strength and muscle, and from a conditioning standpoint, nothing comes close. You're generating total body tension to push a heavy object. Put it this way, if the zombie apocalypse does happen, at least you'll know that you'll be in excellent condition to be a survivor.

Plus, they make you look like a badass.

2 LOADED CARRIES

I'm convinced that nothing packs on more muscle than loaded carries. In addition to improved hip stability, walking with a heavy load forces you to engage your core, your upper back, and arms. It's also worth mentioning that it does a heck of job in improving shoulder function.

You can virtually utilize any implement at your disposal—sandbags, kettlebells, dumbbells, trap bar. Just load it up, pick it up, and start walking.

3 DEADLIFT

I'm not going to beat around the bush here. It's no secret that the deadlift is highly regarded as the king of all exercises. You're essentially working everything from your head to your toes. It's the most primitive movement known to man—picking up an object from the floor. It doesn't get any more "functional" than that.

4 BULGARIAN SPLIT SQUATS

I have such an immense adoration for this exercise simply because it rarely causes me or my clients any problem. In fact, I've found them to almost have a universal application (almost anybody can do them).

Heavy squats work wonders, but due to structural limitations, a lot of people are pretty much in quicksand whenever they try to get under the bar and squat. No point in trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. This is why I'm convinced that the Bulgarian split squat is a far better option than conventional squatting. Even with proper form in a back squat, you're bound to run into some problems, whether it'd be hip, lower back, or knee issues. As an aside, you can virtually load as much weight as you can, but with less loading on the spine. It's a win-win.

I'm aware that this is a very short list. You can make a legitimate argument that I've left off other noteworthy exercises. But make no mistake that proper execution of these movements will yield big time results. Vary the intensity and stay consistent. TS

A DECADE OF 'HELL' ON SAIPAN

JONPEREZ
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Pro bikers head out of the scenic Banzai Cliff during the 2016 Hell of Marianas Century Cycle Race. JON PEREZ

Pro bikers cruise along Beach Road during the 2016 Hell of Marianas Century Cycle Race.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

A thousand kilometers and more than 1,000 competitors later, the annual Hell of the Marianas still manages to challenge cyclists from different parts of the world.

The 100-kilometer race takes riders on a tour of Saipan's scenic spots, the island's idyllic beauty captivating countless participants and visitors alike for nearly a decade. Don't be fooled, though, as the course requires a high degree of skill in conquering the challenging, punishing, and well-blended mix of climbs, sharp turns, and flat runs. If anything, seeing the lush greenery, turquoise blue waters, and remnants of one of World War II's bloodiest battles while navigating the road is mere consolation.

Riders start from the road in front of the entrance to Mariana Resort & Spa, then up to Radar Hill, then toward the dreaded four corners—Suicide Cliff, Bird Island, Grotto, and Banzai Cliff—where the elevation totals more than 3,000 feet above sea level.

The killer hill climbs are what separate the competitors from the pretenders. It is here where your skills and stamina will be tested, against a backdrop of either punishing heat or wet weather. In fact, the Hell of the Marianas could be considered one of the toughest bike races in the Pacific, like the Tour of Guam and the Honolulu Century Ride.

The annual race has already crowned 20 champions, male and female, with former Saipan resident Eli Torgeson winning the first two editions of the race in 2007 and 2008. Australian John Anderson duplicated his feat (2011 and 2012) while Jan Paul Morales of the Philippines is the latest "King of Hell" following his victory last Dec. 3, 2016.

Mieko Carey holds the most number of wins with five (2008, 2010, 2014, 2015, and 2016); Australian Jodie Willett was the first three-time champion from 2011 to 2013. Susan Seay of Guam won the inaugural race in 2007.

Carey used to carry the CNMI flag in different racing events but now represents Guam after moving to the CNMI's southernmost neighbor.

Story of 'Hell'

Northern Mariana Islands Cycling Federation president Vince Seman credits former Pacific Islands Club general manager Kieran Daly as the man behind the race, being into cycling and other endurance sports. "He loved cycling so much that he wanted to have a signature international event here on Saipan."

The Hell of the Marianas was patterned after the one-day Roubaix race in Paris, which is more popularly known as Hell of the North. Daly started planning the "Hell" in 2006.

Though Hell of the Marianas became a real test of skill for road and mountain bikers alike, Daly still made it a fun event by adding teams of two and four-member divisions.

PIC hosted the first six editions of the race, including the year when the hotel resort was sold to Ken Corp., which agreed to do it for the last time in 2012. That same year, the Northern Marianas Island Cycling Federation was formed and took over organizing the race.

"NMICF is another brainchild of Kieran in 2012. By that time, I started to get into mountain biking more. Kieran invited me and a couple of others to lunch so we could form an official group to oversee and promote cycling on Saipan. NMICF then was born."

The Marianas Visitors Authority didn't want the race to suffer an untimely death as it had already become a huge international event. MVA approached NMICF and discussed how to keep the "Hell" going. In 2013, the seventh edition, the NMICF hosted Hell of the Marianas.

LIST OF CHAMPIONS

2016	**Jan Paul Morales**, Philippines (Male) **Mieko Carey**, Guam (Female)
2015	**Ryutaro Nakamura**, Japan (Male) **Mieko Carey**, Guam (Female)
2014	**Konstantin Fast**, Russia (Male) **Mieko Carey**, Guam (Female)
2013	**Kazuhiro Yamamoto**, Japan (Male) **Jodie Willett**, Australia (Female)
2012	**John Anderson**, Australia (Male) **Jodie Willett**, Australia (Female)
2011	**John Anderson**, Australia (Male) **Jodie Willett**, Australia (Female)
2010	**Joon Yong Seo**, South Korea (Male) **Mieko Carey**, Guam (Female)
2009	**Alexandre Baginov**, Russia (Male) **Amber Halliday**, Australia (Female)
2008	**Eli Torgeson**, Saipan (Male) **Mieko Carrey**, Guam (Female)
2007	**Eli Torgeson**, Saipan (Male) **Susan Seay**, Guam (Female)

JON PEREZ | Three bikers from Chinese-Taipei get ready for one of the climbs along Isa Drive during the 2015 Hell of Marianas Century Cycle Race.

JON PEREZ

Bikers from the Philippines pedal along the road heading to Saipan Radar Station during a practice ride for the 2016 Hell of Marianas Century Cycle Race.

"[Hell of the Marianas] would never have happened without the volunteer community and sponsorship from the local [businesses] that understood tourism is a very important industry for the CNMI. MVA came on board about five or six years later," Daly told TAGA *Sports*.

"I also made sure that it would be a fun race. We always made sure after the massages, there would be an after-party where people could enjoy a good meal and each other's company. So they could have great memories of the event and want to come back for another race."

The course layout for the 100-kilometer race is a great mix of flats for sprints and constant climbs, which proved to be a challenge even for veteran riders. Most pros use road bikes that are made for asphalt while their mountain bike counterparts stick to off-road trails like XTERRA Saipan, which also has a great and scenic course.

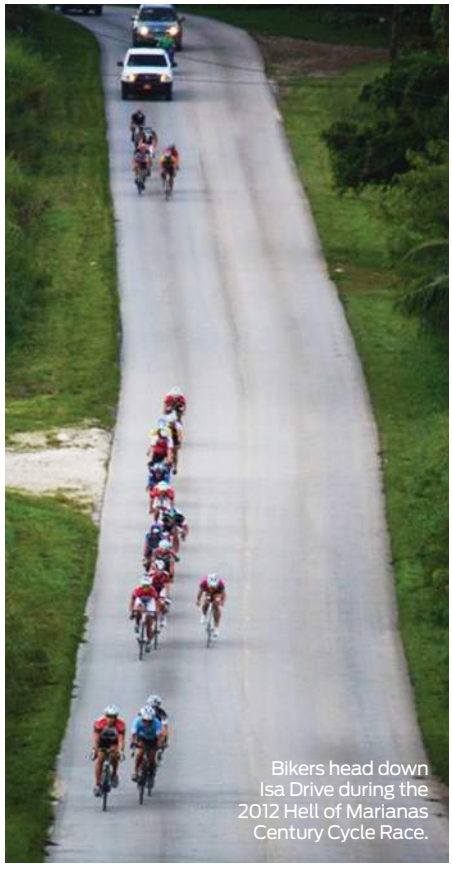
'Watdahell'

"What the hell" were the first three words Filipino pros Jan Paul Morales and Mark Lexer Galedo said upon seeing the Hell of the Marianas course, with the former emerging as this year's champion and in the process dislodging last year's winner, Ryutaro Nakamura of Japan.

Morales is a member of Team Philippine Navy-Standard Insurance and won two legs of Ronda Pilipinas while Galedo, who races for 7-Eleven-Sava Roadbike Philippines, came in at third.

Galedo was also a Ronda champion in 2012, then ruled the Le Tour Filipinas two years ago.

"The course is similar to Subic going to Mt. Samat. The headwind was strong, even when you're already in the flat road. It is like you're also climbing the hills," said Morales.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Bikers head down Isa Drive during the 2012 Hell of Marianas Century Cycle Race.

Subic is a municipality in Zambales province near the coast of Subic Bay, where the former U.S. Naval Base was located.

"Although I'm in good condition, I still find the course challenging. You're against the forces of nature. It rained for a while, making the road slippery and the headwind was strong. It's fun to test the course but I think you need to be very careful as the climbs are dangerous. Sometimes your tires can't get the needed traction since the road has some coral in it."

Galedo said the race forces professionals like them to train and challenge each other. "The race was really tough. There are times you will encounter five or six climbs then flat road. I hope more pro cyclist would join the race so the level of competition would also increase."

"I enjoyed the race. The course was challenging but at the same time you get to enjoy the beautiful scenery. This event just need more promotion and it would become bigger and better in the years to come," he added.

Key volunteers

The NMICF would also like to thank Ricky Castro, Jay Diyco, Ed Diaz, and Jay Santos for helping organize the event and acknowledges the support of government agencies and private sponsors.

Some of the government agencies that assisted the organizers were the Division of Parks and Recreation under the Department of Lands and Natural Resources, the Department of Public Works, Department of Public Safety, and Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

The private sponsors include GPPC, Hawaiian Rock, Philippine Airlines, IT&E, Tan Siu Lin Foundation, Triple J, Gatorade, Hyatt Regency Saipan, Gold's Gym, Saipan Bike Pro, Taro Sue, Bridge Capital, Mango Resort, Power 99, Island Training Solutions, and DFS T Galleria. TS

Q&A WITH JUSTIN ANDREW

Justin Andrew, the current president of the CNMI Paddling Federation, is optimistic about the CNMI's chances in the upcoming Micronesian Games in Yap.

What is the current state of the CNMI Paddling Federation?

The CNMI Paddling Federation is, I would say, being built up at this stage. We are coming to an end for 2016, but for the first time in many years, 2016 has been a busy year for us. We've had different events throughout the year. We look forward to 2017 to build upon what we have done for 2016 and keep the paddling community active—training and competition-wise.

Based on your judgment, has the team shown any improvements so far?

The different clubs have shown tremendous improvements. Improvements in the number of new paddlers that they have recruited to come out; the retaining of seasoned paddlers that they have—all are positive improvements that I've seen. Throughout the competitions, we've seen improvements in the times on the race lanes. Just looking at the paddlers themselves, one could say that they've improved a lot in their paddling techniques and their paddling forms. When those things come in line together, the canoe becomes faster, so you see the results as better times in the lanes.

Are you looking forward to the 2018 Micronesian Games in Yap?

We definitely look forward to any competition, especially the higher-level competitions, such as the 2018 Micronesian Games in Yap. Islands throughout the region, especially in the North Pacific, are going to bring their best paddlers. One of the reasons why we want to really get ourselves prepared and go to Yap is because we want to build our paddling capacity toward the 2021 Pacific Mini Games. We are hosting the 2021 Pacific Mini Games here, and we would like these smaller regional games to be our preparation toward the 2021 Pacific Mini Games.

How do you think Saipan's team will fare against other paddling powerhouses such as Chuuk, Yap, Guam, etc?

Besides the other jurisdictions in the area such as Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Yap, I cannot really speak on their behalf because I don't know what is happening in their paddling community, but I know the CNMI is very active. Guam is continuously being very active in terms of competitions and training; those make local teams very strong. As long as you are active and continue to paddle and continue to train, I think the CNMI would be one of the competitors to watch out for.

What are your future plans for the federation?

Many things. There is a lot on our plate to look forward to. Like I said, we are building up the program. We are actually building it from the ground up right now. We are looking forward to bringing in new equipment, probably a new canoe house at the Minachom Atdao, better organized competitions, better training, stronger local teams, and I look forward to a lot of off-island competitions. I believe that is where we are really going to make a big difference in our training—to train, compete, and learn from the best, where when we come back, try to spread the knowledge locally, rebuild, and go back to competing again. The cycle goes on.

Are there any specific teams that you think the federation should watch out for?

If we're talking about the 2018 Micro Games in Yap, Guam is always a strong contender but those paddlers from the other islands, those are natural paddlers. They grew up paddling, probably not as a sport but they are very natural at it. There is very good raw talent over there, and we should not rule them out. Yap, whenever they compete, they always have a strong team. Pohnpei, in the 2014 Micronesian Games in Pohnpei, the men's team swept everything—they were very strong. Actually, the CNMI was lucky enough to win the gold in the 1500-meter sprint. Pohnpei scooped the 500-meter sprint and showed a very strong performance in the distance races, so they are a very strong team.

Youth paddlers head back to the shore at Kilili Beach during one of the several races last year.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

ERWIN ENCINARES
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

HPV Cancer Prevention

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI). HPV is so common that nearly all sexually active men and women get it at some point in their lives. There are many different types of HPV. Some types can cause health problems including genital warts and various types of cancers, including cervical cancer and cancer of the penis, vagina, anus, and throat. But there are vaccines that can stop these health problems from happening.

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AT THE SAME TIME AS OTHER TEEN VACCINES

One way to avoid HPV is by getting vaccinated with the HPV vaccine. HPV vaccines have been proven SAFE and EFFECTIVE in protecting males and females against diseases like CANCER when taken in the recommended age groups (beginning at 11 years old). zWe start vaccinating children at age 11 to ensure they are protected at a young age before they become adults. Once a person has HPV the vaccine is no longer effective.

2 HPV VACCINE IS CANCER PREVENTION

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3 HPV VACCINE IS RECOMMENDED

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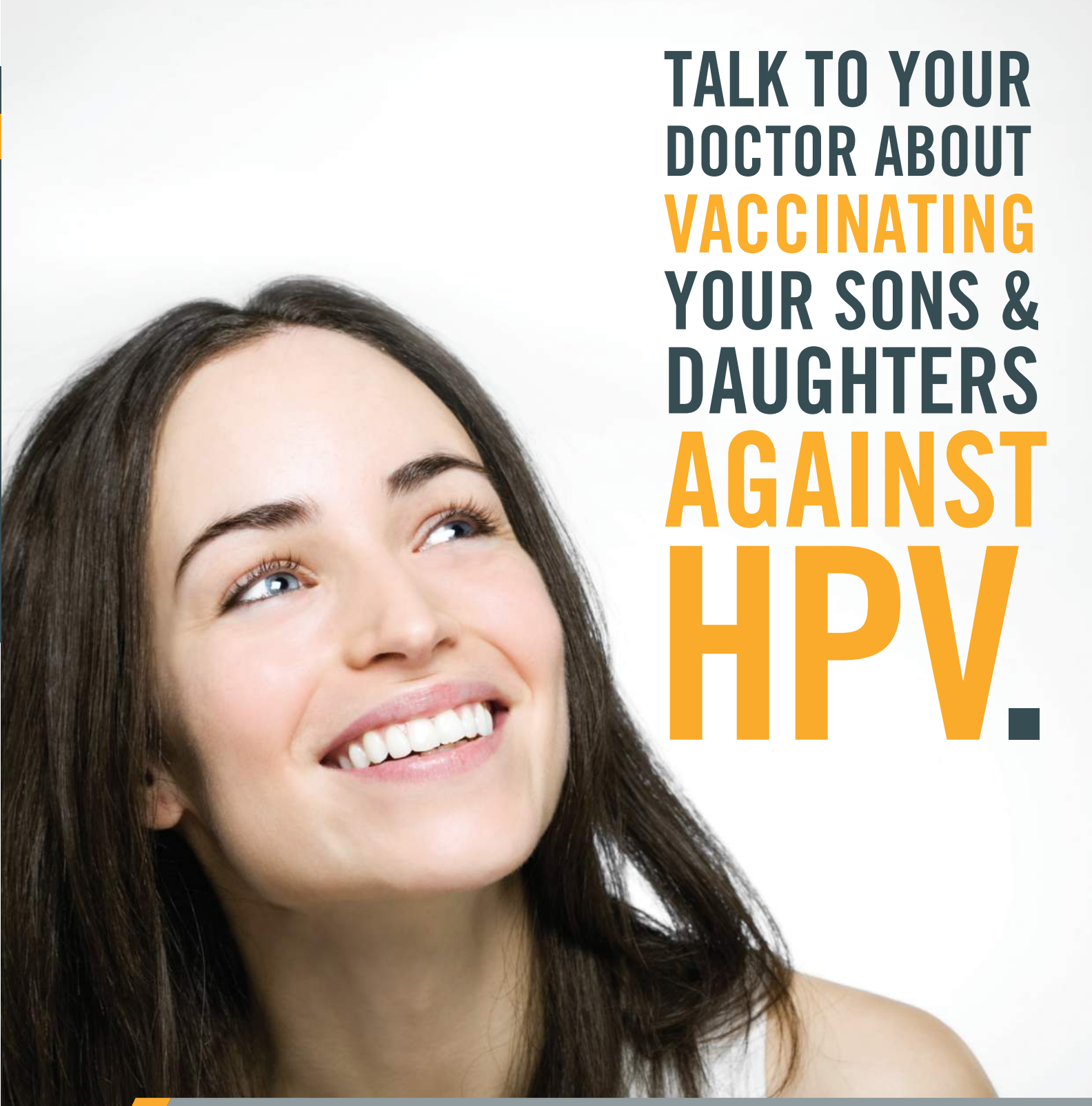

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CNMI Immunization Program

CDC
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Contact the Immunization Program at the Division of Public Health:
Saipan: 236-8745 | Tinian: 433-9233 | Rota: 532-9457
Other Tel. Nos.: 236-8745/8780/81/83
For more information, visit www.cdc.gov.vaccines

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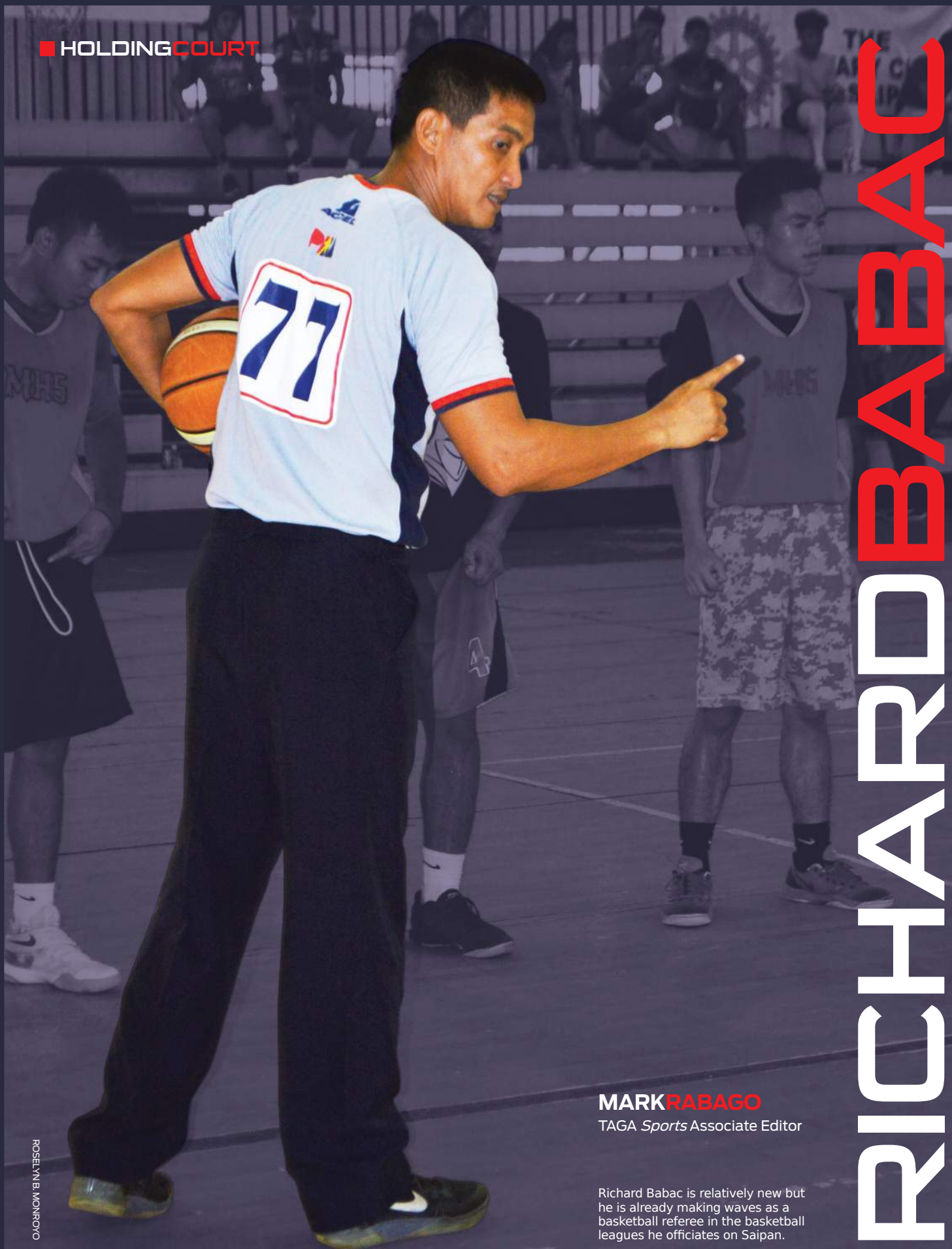

RICHARD BABAC

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

Richard Babac is relatively new but he is already making waves as a basketball referee in the basketball leagues he officiates on Saipan.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

File photo shows Richard Babac with a pool of referees from the Philippine Basketball Association.

Richard Babac is relatively new but he is already making waves as a basketball referee in the basketball leagues he officiates on Saipan.

The 47-year-old cage arbiter cuts an imposing figure in the hard court, with his 6-foot frame and the crisp actions he makes whenever making a foul call, dribbling violation, or just signifying to a table official a made trifecta.

The emphatic gestures, however, is only one part of what makes Babac an effective and in demand professional referee.

You heard that right. Even before he set foot on Saipan in the middle of this year, the engineering graduate of Central Colleges of the Philippines was a referee in Asia's first play-for-pay basketball league, the Philippine Basketball Association.

Not someone to boast, the native of Quezon City said his stint in the PBA, where former Marianas High School varsity Jericho Cruz now plies his trade, was a sweet albeit short one.

"Actually my season in PBA was only short. The league, the people are great and the management was very supportive. Maybe, one year is enough for me. I moved to Saipan to practice my degree as an engineer," he said in an interview with TAGA *Sports*.

Babac said his journey from amateur referee to the pros was relatively smooth and he credits hard work and a little bit of luck for his inclusion in the elite ranks of PBA referees.

"I became a referee just to reinvent myself from a long work layoff. It was 2005 when I decided to become a referee. I read the rules, watched more games to see just how referees move, the posture, the firmness, practice single game officiating, and how to handle pressure during hard games," he said.

One of his first steps to fulfilling his dream of becoming a professional referee brought him to the Philippine Basketball League, a sort of developmental league for basketball players aspiring to graduate to the pro level.

"In 2007, I finally got my chance at the pro league. It was a very fortunate time that I got the slot when the PBA was looking for non-experienced referees for the PBA referee program."

Out of 68 who tried out, which included referees from the University Athletics Association of the Philippines, National Collegiate Athletics Association, and other major leagues, only five slots were made available.

"I'm proud to say that I was one of the five," he said.

Babac was able to relish his PBA dream for only a year, but he has no bad feeling or regrets for his abbreviated stay.

"I only have one good year in my PBA career. I have a lot of memories during my 25 games in the pros. It was really fun to join the PBA All-Star Week in Bacolod, Negros Occidental (in the Central Philippines), given that I'm a new referee."

> "In 2007, I finally got my chance at the pro league. It was a very fortunate time that I got the slot when the PBA was looking for non-experienced referees for the PBA referee program."

After officiating dozens of games on island, Babac concedes that the gulf between how basketball is played in the PBA and on Saipan is enormous.

"The way basketball is being played here on Saipan and in the Philippines is big. Considering the size of the place, the program and the population, it's understandable that players here are not at the level of those playing in the UAAP or NCAA."

Even an inter-village selection in the Philippine capital of Manila can give the top teams on Saipan a run for their money.

"The level of play here is more recreational. For the improvement of the players, I think a good basketball program and a better playing venue should be a priority. For the coaches, put more dedication, game practice and knowledge of the game. I believe that you can only coach a team if you're having regular practices. It's for the coach to understand how the players play. Get to know their strengths and weaknesses," said Babac.

The Armatech Corp. staff and father of three boys said Saipan is very endearing. "Saipan is a nice place. Simple but fast life and the people that I meet are all good, including those inside the basketball court," he said.

Kiyoshi Sekiguchi shows participants in a coaching course where to kick the ball during a practical session at the Koblerville Elementary School Field. ROSELYN B. MONROYO

GOODBYE, SEE YOU LATER COACH SEKI

Three years after steering the Commonwealth to its first international win, Kiyoshi Sekiguchi or Coach Seki of the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association is scheduled to leave Saipan this month and return to Japan.

Coach Seki's tremendous work, expertise, and dedication as a coach and technical director have brought CNMI soccer to another level and he is happy to leave a sort of "legacy" to the Commonwealth's sports community.

"I am happy to be able to help develop CNMI players and coaches and encourage more people to play soccer," said Coach Seki. "I am leaving because of my family. My kids are going to high school in Japan and I want to spend more time with them. It's been an honor and privilege to be able to coach promising athletes and work with people here who are very warm, cooperative, and helpful. I will definitely miss working with them."

ROSELYN MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Coach Seki is on loan from the Japan Football Association, which has been sending its coaches to the island to help grow the sport here since 2005.

His stint with NMIFA came to an abrupt end in 2011, but he returned in 2014 and went above and beyond his duties, using his connection with the football community outside Saipan to bring resources to the island and help improve the sport and its players and coaches.

He coordinated the negotiation for the $40,000 worth of sponsorship of uniforms from Soccer Junky for the CNMI's four national teams; he arranged a series of friendly/training games with Japanese collegiate and club teams; he brought the CNMI U17 National Team training pool to a camp in Japan late last year; he continued the National Elite Academy program; he introduced the PE Support Program to first and fourth graders in both public and private schools; and he held coaching clinics/seminars. The list could go on.

It was also under his tutelage that the Commonwealth notched its first international win (CNMI U15 National Team beat Macau, 2-1, in the 2011 East Asian Football Federation U15 Youth Tournament in Taipei). Coach Seki also led the CNMI Men's National Team to another historic victory (versus Macau, 2-1, in the Preliminary Round 1 of the 2015 EAFF East Asian Cup in Guam).

Coach Seki hopes for more international exposure for the CNMI youth teams.

"The best possible way to bring CNMI football to a higher level is to get as many players as we can, train them for the national team, and have them compete outside Saipan. Continuing the grassroots programs (NEA and the PE support programs) will ensure that NMIFA will find new talents that would become better players through proper training and coaching and eventually be able to play for the national teams," the former Yokohama FC coach added.

Another JFA coach will take Coach Seki's spot and he assured that CNMI soccer will be in good hands.

"The new coach is a great one and, with the leadership of Jerry Tan and the hardworking NMIFA staff, CNMI soccer has nothing to worry about," said Sekiguchi, who is not closing his door to another stint with the Commonwealth's squad.

"Someday, I would like to come back. If I'll be given another chance to work overseas, I will still choose the CNMI," added Sekiguchi, who will remain in contact with NMIFA as he is arranging for another soccer academy to hold a training camp on island in spring this year.

WELL WISHES FOR A BELOVED COACH

"On behalf of NMIFA and entire soccer community in the CNMI, I would like to extend our most sincere appreciation to Coach Seki for his contribution to our soccer program and we wish him best of luck as he returns to Japan with his family. I also want to extend our thanks to Japan Football Association and their president, Kohzo Tashima, for their continuing support to NMIFA. Our program has benefited so much under Coach Seki's leadership and the popularity of soccer continues to grow under his guidance. We will surely miss him and his family as they return to Japan in January 2017."

—JERRY TAN, NMIFA president

Kiyoshi Sekiguchi, left, and other participants in a coaching course watch a drill.

"NMIFA is really very fortunate to have Coach Seki not only because of his credentials as a very qualified coach and soccer program administrator, but also due to his genuine interest in helping CNMI soccer. He applies his coaching knowledge in creating and revising various soccer programs. He creates the annual training plan for the national teams and explains to everyone why there is a need for long-term training and preparations for international competition. He evaluates the progress of our youth programs and changes or introduces new methods that will improve our players. I am grateful for Coach Seki's personal commitment to NMIFA and the CNMI community. He went above the scope of his job to help our national teams. NMIFA may have saved close to a hundred thousand dollars in uniform and equipment cost during the two and a half years that he stayed on Saipan. NMIFA will not only lose a technical director and coach, but also a friend."

—ROSS ZAPANTA, NMIFA general secretary

"Coach Seki is always serious and very professional at work. He taught me a lot of things in soccer and life. I look at him as my boss, a friend, and drinking buddy. I will miss him for sure and hope to work with him again in the future."

—JERSH ANGELES, NMIFA coach/staff

ROSELYN B. MONROY

"We've been so fortunate to have such a smart, caring, and sincere coach who has done many behind the scenes and worked to help improve many aspects of our program in addition to his core responsibility as NMIFA's technical director and head coach. His style is relaxed but professional. He's shown how to be a good leader by being creative, adaptable and addressing the many challenges of developing youth and adult players who did not always have the ability to grow up or be exposed to football since a young age. On the flip side, as he leaves the CNMI, he will carry a legacy here, having developed some of our players who started playing soccer at ages 4 to 8 when NMIFA started in 2005. These players are now ages 15-19, many are part of our current national teams, and several have had the extraordinary experience to travel and compete at the highest international level, becoming ambassadors to promote our beautiful island nation. Some of the older players, too, are playing college soccer. I wish to thank Coach Seki for his steadfast support of CNMI football and also wish he and his family all the best in their next journey in football and in life."

—VICKIE IZUKA, NMIFA vice president

"After I played for my first youth national team in 2011 coached by Coach Seki, I was so motivated to keep playing soccer. He helped me so much and I remember really liking soccer then. I remember after our tournament at the end of 2011 how sad I was when our team returned to Saipan and he didn't. Thank you so much for everything you've done for soccer on the island and I hope to see you again someday!"

—JOEL FRUIT, CNMI Men's National Team/CNMI U15 National Team Member

"Coach Seki really cares about the island and the people, not the paycheck. He has this big white board behind his desk. Usually he turns it into a calendar of all the training sessions and activities for the national teams. Sometimes when there are competitions coming up, he uses it as a tactical board. Sometimes I would catch him with his arms folded, staring at the board for the longest time. It's really endearing, especially because he's not much of a talker. Even if it isn't outwardly, his mind is always on our soccer and how to improve the players."

—MIKKY VARGAS, NMIFA administrative assistant

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Juhn Tenorio, sixth from left, poses with his teammates.
OPPOSITE PAGE: Juhn Tenorio performs a breaststroke at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

JUHN TENORIO

BEATING THE ODDS IN AND OUT OF THE POOL

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

Imagine being hooked to an oxygen tube, an intravenous drip, and all manners of monitoring equipment at the age of 2.

Ten years later, you're gliding in the crystal clear water of the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool and feeling like a boss, as you're just about to break a two-decade old record.

This Olympian swimmer from Japan gives instructions to Juhn Tenorio and his teammates with the Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Juhn Tenorio, a mainstay of the Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center, is truly a breathing, walking, and swimming miracle in goggles and Speedos.

Yet Juhn has no recollection of the kidney disease that almost took his life even before he had a chance to really live it.

The hemolytic uremic syndrome that struck him at a tender age might as well be Latin to him, as the now 12-year-old Tanapag Elementary School student is your typical preteen, preoccupied with schoolwork, social messaging via smart phone, and of course admiring pretty girls.

The son of Jeffrey and Hiroko Tenorio is also one of the mainstays of swim coach Hiro Kimura's Tsunami Saipan team, recently making headlines after breaking the 22-year-old record of Saipan Swim Club's Joshua Taitano in the 50-meter backstroke.

No recollection

Juhn got his start in the sport like most prodigious swimmers—a magnet-like attraction to take a dip that usually—almost instantly—graduates to frolicking in the water. It also helped that relatives paved the way for him to join Kimura's rigid Tsunami Saipan club.

"My godbrother, Daisuke Fitial, was swimming at Tsunami and I always go to the pool to cheer him and his friends. It was very natural that I joined," Juhn told TAGA *Sports*.

While he remembers how his infatuation with swimming started, Juhn struggles to recollect how HUS affected him at a young age.

"I never considered myself having a serious illness when I started swimming. I barely remembered how it was in Hawaii and Japan for the five-month treatment. It was just really fun playing in the water with other kids," he said.

While he is oblivious to the HUS that threatened his life, his parents feared the worst and tried to cope as best they could.

"He was 2 years old when he was diagnosed. First of all, we had no clue what HUS was or how it would damage our son. But shortly after he was admitted, we figured out it is a deadly and serious sickness as we could overhear doctors saying he was in very critical condition, or he might not be able to make it, etc. How did we react? We broke down literally, didn't know what to do next," said Hiroko, who is originally from Japan and used to work for the Marianas Visitors Authority.

It was touch and go for a while, but thanks to doctors at the Hawaii hospital where he was rushed by medevac when his condition became critical, Juhn survived.

"His kidney was severely damaged and he had an operation to install the catheter for peritoneal dialysis in Hawaii. The doctor didn't believe his kidney would recover but fortunately, it slowly recovered during treatment over the next few years," said Hiroko.

It was a long and arduous recovery period for Juhn but he began to feel better after turning 5 in 2010. So much better that his parents finally agreed to enroll him in swimming classes.

"He was 5 years old in 2010 when his kidney rate reached almost 50 percent compared to a regular child his same age and no more maintenance medication was needed. The doctor in Japan confirmed he has no restriction on sports and we asked him what he wants, and he said swimming. We wanted to treat him as a regular child and see how his body responds," said Hiroko.

Slow but sure

Tenorio was no instant wunderkind in the pool as his physical limitations—on account of his past illness—meant the Tsunami Saipan coaches had to break him in gently.

"He was one of the slowest in Tsunami Swimming club history to be promoted from fitness to athletic/competitive level. For the first two years, he was with the fitness class, coached by a very patient coach named Mr. Stan Good. Once he was promoted to the athletic/competitive level, our head coach Hiro trained him with a lot of patience once again," said Hiroko.

Juhn freely admits to a not-so-impressive start to his swimming career.

"I got sick and tired very easily for the first few years of swimming but when I became an athlete/competitive swimmer, it was nonstop practice everyday and it was very hard."

Kimura said it took time for Juhn to develop as a swimmer not only because of

Hiroko has her picture taken at the hospital in Hawaii a few days after Juhn Tenorio's admission.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

his prior bout with HUS, but also because he needed more time to become tough mentally.

"But since last summer's practice, his motivation was getting higher and higher. I think that it was also a big turning point for him that we sent him to Tsunami Guam alone for mental training. After that his ability blossomed at once this season," Kimura said.

Juhn finally got his breakthrough in the 2012 Saipan International Meet where he won the overall High Point Winner for the boys' 8-and under division, competing against swimmers from Saipan, Guam, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

"I was a nobody until the Saipan International Meet in 2012. There were swimmers from Saipan, Guam, FSM, and Palau and we competed for points in eight events. I won the gold medal, first time in any medal, at the category of 8 years and under. That was the moment when I became fully determined to go with swimming as my lifetime sport," he said.

Proud parents

Today, Hiroko and Jeffrey are thankful and even marvel at how Juhn has fully recovered and is thriving in such a competitive sport—a far cry from sleepless nights beside his limp body in a hospital bed in Hawaii.

"All we wanted for him is to be a healthy child like any other kid that we thought we might never had. From the life-and-death experience to a CNMI record-breaker, it is beyond proud and we can't find the right expression," said Hiroko.

For now Juhn just wants to reach his full potential in swimming. He also has his eyes set on a college scholarship through the sport he loves.

"Haven't thought about the future yet. It would be exciting if I can continue swimming in a major college. Maybe I could also attend the University of Guam and join Tsunami Guam during school time, and join Tsunami Saipan during vacation time. I can help younger swimmers like what our graduate swimmers do for us. That would be a fun future and I'll be honored to do it too," he said.

Whatever Juhn decides to do, Hiroko and Jeffrey will fully support him.

"We want him to continue swimming, no matter what. If that leads him to get a college scholarship, that's great, but if not, at least we are confident that he can achieve whatever he sets his mind to and that confidence will help him in the future."

Juhn should also be an example of how parents should allow their children to follow their hopes and aspirations despite being weighed down by shortcomings earlier in life.

"We strongly believe that parents should give children opportunities or options to join sports in order for them to be healthy, find lifetime best friends, be confident in themselves, and stay out of trouble. It is so precious to see a child who has focus in such a small island and work for it to get where they want to be," Hiroko said.

Juhn said he's glad that his parents allowed him to try swimming and didn't handle him with kid gloves after his initial scare.

"Everybody should be given a chance to try what you want to do, whether you have an illness or not. Find what you like, and love doing it," he said.

Kimura said he's just happy that he was able to guide Juhn to become the best swimmer he could be.

"Besides being his swimming coach, I am also a parent with two children. Therefore, I deeply understand his parents' feelings. Every time I thought of his mother's feelings, I seriously felt that I had to make him a great swimmer."

Juhn also took time to thank everyone who helped his family when he was diagnosed with HUD when he was 2. He also gave a shout out to a cousin whom he treats like a brother, who Hiroko said always prayed beside Juhn's hospital bed during his early struggles with the disease.

"I was only 2 years old when I got sick but now I realized how I had survived with so many people's support, I can say thanks to the CNMI community for praying and helping raise funds for my medical expenses. I would also like to thank my family for supporting me to be where I am now, and special love goes to my brother, JJ, who passed away in an unfortunate accident. Love you, JJ."

Fiji's Seremaia Tuwai Vunisa is tackled by a Great Britain player during their gold medal match in the 2016 Olympic Games at the Deodoro Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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BUILDING RUGBY FR

ROSELYNMONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

The last time the CNMI competed in rugby 7s in a regional tournament was in 1999 during the South Pacific Games in Guam.

Eighteen long years later, the Commonwealth is making a comeback on the pitch and will try to build a team that can keep up with powerhouse Fiji and contenders Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu—the host of the 2017 Pacific Mini Games.

"I was with Team CNMI (track and field) in the 1999 South Pacific Games and saw how our rugby squad was beaten in the competition. No offense meant to the 1999 team, but I believed that squad was hastily put up, not regulated, and poorly organized," said Northern Marianas Rugby Union president Stanley Iakopo, who has been working on reviving the sport in the Commonwealth since returning to Saipan in December 2015.

Iakopo

"It's just unfortunate that happened because we have a lot of talents. These talents, if given proper training and guidance, enough practice time, and support from the community, will do well in any competition," said Iakopo, who used to play for the Air Force in elite leagues in the East Coast.

Iakopo is laying the foundation to revive the sport and form a competitive team by talking to prospective players and communicating with off-island coaches. He is visiting firefighters, police officers, and other interested individuals, convincing them to try the sport. Iakopo also contacted his friends, who are former players and coaches, hoping to bring them to Saipan to share their expertise with the island's players.

"Guam coaches and players were supposed to come down here last month (December), but because of the holiday season, the planned clinic was postponed. We will have it early this year," added Iakopo, whose group was granted membership to the Northern Marianas Sports Association last year.

NMSA, during its monthly meeting last October, announced that the rugby team is one of the three squads that will represent the CNMI in the 2017 Pacific Mini Games, which will be held in Port Vila in December.

"We will be building a young, mobile, and fit team," Iakopo said.

Once he gets commitment from interested

Fiji's Vatemo Ravouvou is chased by Great Britain defenders during their gold medal match in the 2016 Olympic Games at the Deodoro Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

AP

OM THE GROUND UP

Josua Tuisova, right, scores Fiji's second try in their semis match against Japan in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

AP

players, Iakopo said they will be divided into teams and play games for months. Those who will stand out in the series of matches will then be selected for the squad.

"By summer, we will have a team that will train very hard to get ready for the Pacific Mini Games," said Iakopo.

Twelve players will be picked.

"I am not promising that the team that we will have will win the gold medal in the Pacific Mini Games. But, what I can promise is that we will have a squad that will be very competitive and will go all out in every match," Iakopo said.

"In reviving rugby here, our short-term goals are to get players, give them proper training, and form a competitive team. As far as winning the gold medal, it will take time. Fiji took time before it dominated the sport in the Pacific and then won the Olympics," the Air Force Reserve Command recruiter added.

Fiji was the champion in the rugby 7s when the ragtag CNMI crew competed in the South Pacific Games 17 years ago, while PNG and Vanuatu bagged the silver and bronze medals, respectively. Fiji's rugby team also gave the island nation its first gold medal in the Olympics after crushing Great Britain in the finals, 43-7, in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil last year.

"Fiji's achievement is an inspiration to all of us in the Pacific. They built the foundation, worked hard, and waited for so long to get that win and the Olympic gold medal. We have to follow their lead and start somewhere so we can promote the sport and improve it and our players," Iakopo said. TS

SIMON T. MANACOP

STARTING YOUNG IS AN ADVANTAGE

FERDIE DELATORRE
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

At 11, Simon Tababa Manacop would follow his father—a regular bowler on night leagues—to Saipan's only bowling alley. His first strike opened the floodgates, sparking his interest in the sport.

At 15, Manacop joined the October Masters Tournament. He was the youngest among the competitors. That was in 1994. The format was 16 straight games without a break. Grit and determination propelled him to the top spot.

"What was memorable about it was how tough the competition was," recalls Manacop, now 37 and a police detective at the CNMI Department of Public Safety.

A few months after making that first strike, Manacop was asked to go with a junior group that makes a yearly trip to Tokyo, Japan. It was a friendship trip coordinated by the Rotary Club of Saipan and the Rotary Club of Tokyo. He was chosen in the years 1990 and 1991.

"On this trip, we would meet with professional bowlers from the U.S. and Japan where they would host about an hour clinic," he said.

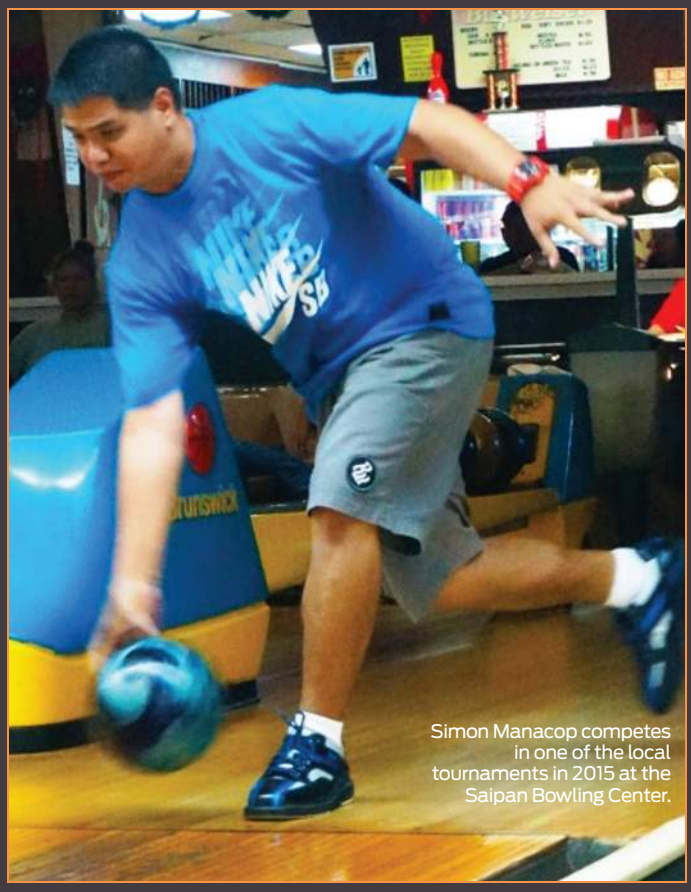
Since then, Manacop has competed in international competitions in Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Guam, Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, and China. He competes at least once a year within the Asian region. Just in May last year, Manacop won the masters event for the annual CNMI Masters.

"This was my first CNMI Masters champion," says Manacop, who also earned three King of the Lanes titles over a period of four years. In 1996, the Northern Marianas Sports Association presented him with the "Student Athlete of the Year" award.

There are instances when he does not bowl for quite some time. Manacop actively plays only two days a week on the weekend. "Because of work, I am only able to play in two leagues in a year," he says. But because he already learned a lot from the sport, it's now about preparing himself mentally and physically before any competition.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Simon Manacop, left, joins teammate Ador Dimaano for a photo after receiving their prizes in the doubles event in the 34th CNMI May Masters Tournament during the award ceremony at the Nami Bar of Kanoa Resort last year.



JON PEREZ

Simon Manacop competes in one of the local tournaments in 2015 at the Saipan Bowling Center.

When asked why he loves the sports, Manacop says as a child it was more of the entertainment value, trying to get the sharpest hook possible and knocking down pins.

"Growing up and playing at a higher competitive level you come to realize that bowling has a fair playing field," he says, adding that lane conditions could be adjusted to where others play better and vice versa.

So in different competitions, Manacop says, there will be different results.

It is the even playing field that he likes about the sport plus the added yearly off-island tournament that they participate in.

Manacop acknowledges that the sport has come to higher level in terms of lanes and equipment, and that synthetic lanes and high reactive balls are what carries the market now.

"Definitely if you don't have any experience playing at that level, then there will be difficulties in development," he says

As the CNMI does not have the latest state-of-the-art bowling centers, this is where that the Commonwealth should start off on, Manacop says. Saipan now has only one bowling center. Manacop notes that the bowling alley in San Jose has been around for a long time now. "I've developed my shots based on what we have," he says.

He says the CNMI has a lot of potential to have very good bowlers. "Starting off young is more of an advantage," he says.

He believes the CNMI can accommodate national bowling competitions, which will not only develop local bowlers but will also attract other countries to come over.

Manacop believes there is no secret to bowling well. "There is really no secret but giving 110 percent each time you play."

He has four children and so far he sees his oldest and youngest having an interest in the sport. His advice to his children and aspiring bowlers is just to bowl often, be competitive, and be updated on how the sport changes.

For aspiring bowlers, Manacop urges them to participate in leagues and competitions. "Try to shave off your handicap as you will never get better with higher handicaps."

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